

NCA
VOC- FOR IOP/FN

BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-0507
DAVID LENT/ROME

APRIL 5, 1976

SOVIET SUPPORT FOR ITALIAN COMMUNISTS
(VOICE VERSION WITH INSERTS IN TAPE LIBRARY)

ANNCR:

THE QUESTION OF LINKS BETWEEN THE SOVIET AND ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTIES HAS BEEN EXAMINED WITH MORE ATTENTION THAN USUAL RECENTLY, AS THE ITALIAN COMMUNISTS HAVE PUSHED THEIR BID TO SHARE POWER WITH THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATS. V-0-A'S DAVID LENT SENDS THIS BACKGROUND REPORT FROM ROME.

VOICE:

ONE OF THE MOST FREQUENTLY HEARD ASSERTIONS FROM ITALY'S COMMUNIST PARTY THESE DAYS IS THAT THE PARTY IS INDEPENDENT OF THE SOVIET UNION AND THE SOVIET COMMUNIST PARTY, IDEOLOGICALLY AND FINANCIALLY. THE ITALIAN PARTY CLAIMS IT SUPPORT ITS ACTIVITIES FROM MEMBERSHIP DUES, CONTRIBUTIONS OF FIFTY PERCENT OF THE SALARIES OF COMMUNIST MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND PARTY OFFICIALS, NEWSPAPER SUBSCRIPTIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS FROM PRIVATE INDIVIDUALS.

AN ARTICLE APPEARING RECENTLY IN THE AMERICAN MAGAZINE, "NEW REPUBLIC" CASTS THIS CLAIM IN CONSIDERABLE DOUBT. WRITTEN BY AN AMERICAN HISTORIAN TEACHING IN ROME, MICHAEL LEDEEN, AND AN AMERICAN JOURNALIST LIVING IN ROME, CLAIRE STERLING, THE ARTICLE CLAIMED THAT THE GREATER PART OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY'S FINANCING COMES FROM THE SOVIET BLOC IN THE FORM OF COMMISSIONS FROM COMMUNIST-OWNED IMPORT/EXPORT FIRMS TRADING WITH EASTERN EUROPE, AND AS DIRECT PAYMENTS FROM THE SOVIET UNION. OF THE MONEY WHICH COMES IN THE FORM OF DIRECT PAYMENTS, PROFESSOR LEDEEN SAYS:

TAPE: CUT ONE -- LEDEEN

"THAT PROBABLY RUNS SOMEWHERE AROUND ONE-THIRD OF THEIR TOTAL REAL BUDGET. WE'VE ARRIVED AT THIS FIGURE AS A RESULT OF WELL-INFORMED GUESSES BY PEOPLE WHO STUDY THE QUESTION, AND ALSO AS A RESULT OF OUR STUDIES OF PAST BUDGETS. WE HAVE OBTAINED COPIES OF OLD COMMUNIST PARTY BUDGETS FROM THE FIFTIES AND EARLY SIXTIES--THEIR REAL BUDGETS, NOT THEIR PUBLISHED BUDGETS. AND THEN EXTRAPOLATING FROM THAT, AND ASSUMING THAT LESS MONEY COMES TODAY THEN USED TO COME--IT USED TO BE EIGHTY, NINETY PERCENT IN DIRECT AID--AND NOW, WE THINK IT'S VERY MUCH LESS. WE THINK IT'S THIRTY TO THIRTY-FIVE PERCENT."

VOICE:

THE IMPLICATIONS OF THIS INFORMATION, PROFESSOR LEDEEN SAYS, ARE APPARENT:

TAPE: CUT TWO -- LEDEEN

"I THINK THAT THIS REALLY THROWS THE QUESTION OF THE POSSIBLE INDEPENDENCE OF THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY FROM MOSCOW INTO REAL QUESTION (DOUBT). AND I THINK THAT IT'S CLEAR THAT ANY PARTY THAT DEPENDS IN LARGE PART FOR ITS INCOME UPON THE SOVIET UNION AND EASTERN EUROPE CANNOT WITH CLEAR CONSCIENCE CLAIM TO BE INDEPENDENT OF THEM. AT A CERTAIN POINT, PEOPLE WHO PAY YOUR BILLS EXTRACT PRICES FROM YOU; YOU HAVE TO PAY SOMETHING BACK TO THEM."

VOICE:

THE ITALIAN COMMUNIST PARTY HAS BECOME A LARGE EXTREPRENEUR IN ITS OWN RIGHT FOLLOWING IN THE HALLOWED FOOTSTEP OF OTHER ITALIAN PARTIES. SOME OF ITS ENTERPRISES ARE STRICTLY ITALIAN, BUT MUCH OF ITS MONEY COMES IN COMMISSIONS FROM ITALIAN IMPORT/EXPORT FIRMS DOING BUSINESS WITH EASTERN EUROPE. THERE IS AN ARGUMENT TO BE MADE THAT AS THE ITALIAN PARTY DEVELOPS ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF INCOME, IT CAN AFFORD TO BE MORE INDEPENDENT OF THE SOVIET UNION. AGAIN, PROFESSOR LEDEEN:

TAPE: CUT THREE -- LEDEEN

"I THINK THE PARTY HAS AN ELEMENT OF INDEPENDENCE THAT IT DIDN'T HAVE IN THE PAST. BUT I DON'T THINK IT COMES FROM THE IMPORT/EXPORT SOCIETIES. I THINK IT COMES FROM THE MONEY THEY MAKE WITHIN ITALY, AND MONEY THAT THEY MAY MAKE WITH WESTERN TRADE. I'M VERY SKEPTICAL OF THE ARGUMENT THAT THE FACT THE PARTY HAS DEVELOPED ITS IMPORT/EXPORT SOCIETIES MEANS THAT THEY ARE MORE INDEPENDENT FROM THE RUSSIANS."

VOICE:

PROFESSOR LEDEEN BELIEVES THAT MANY TOP ITALIAN COMMUNISTS WANT INDEPENDENCE FROM THE SOVIET UNION. MANY, HE SAYS, BELIEVE THAT IF THEY COME TO POWER, THEY WILL BE ABLE TO CARRY OUT POLICIES INDEPENDENT OF SOVIET INFLUENCE. BUT IF THE COMMUNISTS COME TO POWER IN ITALY, PROFESSOR LEDEEN SAYS:

TAPE: CUT FOUR -- LEDEEN

"TWO VERY DRAMATIC THING ARE GOING TO HAPPEN. THE FIRST THING THAT WILL HAPPEN IS THAT THE LAST WESTERN FOREIGN CAPITAL IN THE COUNTRY WILL UNDOUBTEDLY GO; EVERY BUSINESSMAN THAT YOU TALK TO HERE, EVERY MULTINATIONAL CORPORATION THAT ONE HEARS FROM, SAY THAT IF THE COMMUNISTS COME, WE GO.

THE SECOND THING THAT WILL HAPPEN IS THAT THE WORKERS WHO FOR ALL THESE YEARS HAVE HEARD THE COMMUNIST PROMISES OF SCHOOLS, OF HOSPITALS, OF LAW AND ORDER, OF CLEAN STREETS, OF SALARIES FOR EVERYONE, OF VACATIONS FOR EVERYONE, SO ON AND SO FORTH, WILL THEN START TO MAKE THOSE DEMANDS. AND THEY WILL BE MAKING THOSE DEMANDS FROM AN ECONOMY THAT WILL BE PROBABLY IN WORSE SHAPE THAN IT IS TODAY. AT THAT POINT, WHERE ARE THE COMMUNISTS GOING TO TURN? I POSE THIS IS AN OPEN QUESTION: WHERE WILL THEY GO FOR THEIR SUPPORT? THEY'LL NEED MONEY, WHERE WILL THEY GET THIS FROM? ALL THE STATEMENTS THAT ONE HEARS TODAY FROM THE COMMON MARKET, FROM THE UNITED STATES, FROM THE GERMANS, FROM THE FRENCH, ALL THESE GOVERNMENTS SAY THEY WILL NOT HELP ANY COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT IN ITALY. THEY REGARD IT AS A MENACE, THE IMPOSSIBLE DESTRUCTION OF NATO, AND SO ON SO FORTH. IS IT NOT MORE LIKELY THAT ON A BASIS OF THEIR HISTORIES, AND ON A BASIS OF THEIR IDEOLOGY, THE COMMUNISTS WILL TURN TO RUSSIA FOR THIS KIND OF SUPPORT, IT JUST SEEMS TO ME THAT THE INTERNAL LOGIC OF THE SITUATION SUGGESTS THAT THEY WILL BE DRIVEN IN THAT DIRECTION."

VOICE:

THERE ARE HISTORIC SITUATIONS, PROFESSOR LEDEEN SAYS, THAT DRIVE PARTIES AND LEADERS IN DIRECTIONS THEY MIGHT NOT WANT TO GO, AND THE ITALIAN COMMUNISTS, HE SAYS, MIGHT BE CAUGHT IN THIS KIND OF TRAP RIGHT NOW.

-0-

GH/RTD